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STANDARDIZATION OF SPECIFICATIONS FOR 1:50,000 TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP FOR AFRICA

1. Among the topics on the agenda for the present Conference, is that concerning the standardization of specifications for topographical maps in Africa. Experience has shown that any time prior to the exercise to standardize the specifications of specific topographic map series or topical maps, studies had to be made of the existing map specifications. These studies examined such questions as the need to standardize, technical implications as a result of possible changes in methods of map preparation taking into account costs and the psychological impact on users.

2. Example of such an exercise is the amount of work that was put into conceiving the specification for the International Map of the World at the millionth scale. The document entitled "Standardization of Technical Specifications for Basic Topographical Maps in Africa " (E/ECA/NRD/CART/10) was a joint effort of the African Association of Cartography and the ECA. It contained tables of specimen symbols extracted from a wide range of maps of African countries. Care was taken for the maps to be as representative as possible of:

(a) various specifications currently in use;
(b) various African geographical regions;and
(c) social groupings.

The team which prepared the main working document extracted as many symbols as possible so as to provide the group of experts with a wide range of symbols from which to choose those they considered useful in the compilation of a suitable standardized set of specifications for Africa. The document was studied by a group of experts at their meeting in December 1985; it made mention of attempts made by groups of countries and agencies to present a standardized specification for topographic maps for Africa. The paper discussed exhaustively the difficulties brought about by not having a common specifications for maps in Africa. This took into account fundamental pre-requisites which have to be sorted out prior to the adoption of common specifications. The paper as well as the experts recognized that African cartography was fragmented as a result of practices inherited from colonial

era. Furthermore, it recognized the need to work towards meaningful international co-operation and African unity in particular.

3. As it is mentioned in the report of the meeting of the group of experts, the document discussed both the mathematical aspects of cartography which provide the framework for map preparation. The experts studied the two parts of the principal document. In addition other documents were submitted which helped the group to direct all its attention to Africa's needs rather than be influenced by the traditions and sectoral interests.

4. Looking back at traditions and sectoral interests, it is necessary to mention some of the assumed problems the experts examined, and which assisted them to appreciate the magnitude of the task before them. Briefly the problems are:

(i) the question of change from established practices in each country;

(ii) the change of symbols which may result in additional costs in the purchase or making those symbols which the country has not used before;

(iii) the question whether manufacturers of stick-on symbols may agree to produce symbols African countries need;

(iv) related to the above, concerns suitable cutters used in scribing, prescribed printing inks, type faces, the size of printing materials etc, etc.

Having examined those and other problems, the experts found favour in arguments that supported standardization. Notable among these were the advantages to be derived from uniformity of standards permitting wider usage of maps for projects that cross frontiers; forging a unified African cartographic conceptualism. With regard to fears of suppliers of drawing and reproduction tools and materials refusing to comply, their fears were allayed by the fact that, on the contrary, the manufacturers of such materials would instead welcome the standardization due to the opportunities provided by a wider market.

5. In the course of its deliberation, the group decided to deal with aspects for the standardization of specifications for the 1:50,000 map series and deferred that of the 1:250,000 scale till a later date.

6. The meeting recommended 1/ that this Conference endorse the adoption of the proposed set of symbols and that the ECA should collaborate with national cartographic institutions for the purpose of producing a printed specimen. Nevertheless, it is expected that fruitful comments will come out of the Conference and the recommended conventional signs and symbols for 1:50,000 map series will be approved for application.

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1/ Report of the meeting of the group of experts (E/ECA/IRD/CART/15).